

ARGUMENTS/REMARKS

Applicants would like to thank the examiner for the careful consideration given the present application, and for the personal interview conducted on May 11, 2004. The application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office action and the interview, and amended as necessary to more clearly and particularly describe and claim the subject matter which applicants regard as the invention.

Claims 1-7 remain in this application. Claims 8-22 have been added to this application and are supported by the prior claims and the specification.

Claims 1-3, 6-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kaminura (JP 07-154761A). For the following reasons, the rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1, as amended, recites

a processing means including a microprocessor for executing an image modification program for implementing one or more image modification processing techniques which subject the pickup image signal to an image modification processing to produce a modified image signal for protecting a portrait right

(lines 7-11; emphasis added). Kaminura does not suggest any processing means including a “microprocessor” for executing an “image modification program” to produce a modified image signal, as recited in the claim.

As discussed at the personal interview, Kaminura teaches a device that uses switches and logic gates to modify an output of an A/D converter (see Figure 2) to basically short out various output bits. However, Kaminura does *not* suggest using a microprocessor for executing programs for modifying an image signal, as recited in the claim. The Examiner agreed at the personal interview that Kaminura does not appear to show a microprocessor, or teach any program execution, and thus claim 1 is patentable over the reference. Claims 2-7, which depend on claim 1, are patentable over Kaminura for the same reasons (as well as for the limitations contained therein).

Claim 6 recites that the “processing means performs a resolution reducing processing for reducing a resolution of the pickup image signal”. Kaminura does not specifically suggest resolution reducing processing capability. The Examiner “notes” that Kaminura

teaches “image modification processing” and “recognizes to apply different image modifications including...resolution reducing processing...”, but the Examiner fails to support this “note” with any citation showing where Kaminura teaches this. A close reading of the English language abstract does not support the Examiner’s assertion, as no discussion of resolution reduction can be found. Instead, Kaminura merely suggests direct modification of the digital video signal to corrupt the image by shorting out output bits, rather than actually “processing” the image, as that term is used in the art. Thus, the rejection is improper and hence claim 6 is patentable over the reference.

Claim 7 recites that the “processor performs a tone resolution reducing processing for reducing a tone resolution of the pickup image signal”. Kaminura does not suggest tone resolution reducing processing capability. The Examiner “notes” that Kaminura teaches “image modification processing” and “recognizes to apply different image modifications including...tone resolution processing...”, but the Examiner fails to support this “note” with any citation showing where Kaminura supposedly teaches this. A close reading of the English language abstract does not support the Examiner’s assertion, as no discussion of tone resolution reduction can be found. Instead, as discussed above, Kaminura seems to merely suggest direct modification of the digital video signal to corrupt the image. Thus, the rejection is improper and hence claim 7 is patentable over the reference.

Claim 8, as amended, recites:

image modification processing means *for executing a program* which subjects the pickup image signal to an image modification processing for protecting a portrait right, said image modification including one or more of defocusing processing, deforming processing, resolution reducing processing, tone resolution reducing processing, diffusing image processing, transverse blurring processing, and contour extracting processing;

(emphasis added). As also discussed at the personal interview, the reference does not teach or suggest any “executing” of a program for performing the listed process, and thus the claim is patentable over the reference.

Claims 11, 14, 17, and 20 were amended to contain similar claims as those discussed above at the suggestion of the Examiner (in particular, the “executing of a program”), and thus, as discussed at the personal interview, are patentable over the reference for similar reasons. Claims 9-10, 12-13, 15-16, 18-19, and 21-25, which depend, directly or indirectly,

on one of the above discussed claims, are patentable over the reference for at least the same reasons.

Claims 4-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kaminura (JP 07-154761A) in view of Hiroaki (U.S.5,786,846). For the following reasons, the rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 4 & 5 are patentable over Kaminura for the reasons set out for claim 1. Hiroaki does not overcome the cited deficiencies of Kaminura, and thus claims 4 & 5 are patentable over the combination as well.

Further, the Examiner has not provided the proper motivation for combining the references. Accordingly, the combination is improper, and hence the rejection cannot stand. Thus, claims 4-5 are patentable over the references.

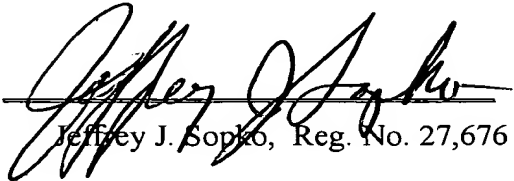
In consideration of the foregoing analysis, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in a condition for allowance and notice to that effect is hereby requested. If it is determined that the application is not in a condition for allowance, the examiner is invited to initiate a telephone interview with the undersigned attorney to expedite prosecution of the present application.

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If there are any additional fees resulting from this communication, please charge same to our Deposit Account No. 16-0820, our Order No. 33869.

Respectfully submitted,

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